

# FINAL REPORT

Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program

Maintenance Dredging Project  
USACE  
Morehead City, NC  
Inner Harbor

Contract Number:  
GDSNAP-08-08-G-0001

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Submitted by:



Marine Endangered Species Observer Program

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>METHODS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>RESULTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>

## ABSTRACT

*A twenty-four hour per day marine endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredge McFarland 21 March thru 04 April 2008 during the Morehead City, NC Inner Harbor maintenance dredging project. Endangered and threatened sea turtles *Caretta caretta* (loggerhead), *Chelonia mydas* (green), *Lepidochelys kempii* (Kemp's ridley), *Dermochelys coriacea* (leatherback), *Eretmochelys imbricata* (hawksbill) and marine mammal *Eubalaena glacialis* (Northern Right Whale) were the species of interest. Notes were also taken of any other marine mammal sightings in the area. There were zero endangered species incidents involving sea turtles or marine mammals during this project.*

## INTRODUCTION

The REMSA Inc. Marine Endangered Species Observer Division was subcontracted by U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wilmington District to monitor the impact of dredging on sea turtles and marine mammal species in the area of the dredge operation. Pursuant to agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), two certified observers were required onboard the vessel to document any detected incidents involving species of interest.

## SCOPE OF WORK

REMSA provided the necessary trained personnel and equipment to clean and maintain inflow screens onboard the hopper dredge *McFarland*. Monitoring was performed 24 hours each day for the duration of the project. Observers inspected and cleaned all inflow screens, inspected both dragheads each time they were brought on deck for cleaning and maintenance and maintained a daylight bridge watch. Any death or injury involving species of interest, the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), and hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) were to be identified, logged, measured, and photographed. A load sheet was completed for each load whether or not turtle parts were found. In the case of an incident or take involving a sea turtle or marine mammal, incident report forms were to be completed and the observers were to contact NMFS and the USACE within twenty-four hours of the incident. A daylight bridge watch was conducted during periods when the observer was not occupied with screen cleaning duties. Observers ensured that dredge crew personnel were aware of the need to avoid incidents involving any endangered animal, and that civil and criminal penalties are possible for harming or harassing endangered species.

## METHODS

One observer boarded on 17 March 2008 and sailed with the *McFarland* from Philadelphia to Morehead City. While in route, the observer maintained a bridge watch during daylight hours. Full coverage was initiated when dredging began on 21 March 2008. Two certified observers were present during prime sea turtle activity, each working 12 hour shifts, during dredging activity.

The dredge *McFarland* functioned with 100% inflow screening for all 73 loads and operated with sea turtle draghead deflectors for all loads. The screening baskets were fitted with 4" x 4" screening material to insure that parts of the species of interest would not be allowed to flow through into the hopper. All dragheads and screening baskets were checked after each hopper load was completed during the observers 12-hour shift. The appropriate forms were filled out; noting any incidents regarding species of interest as well as noting other marine life and abiotic material present in the inflow boxes.

A bridge lookout was maintained during those daylight hours that the observer was not on deck checking screens. Watch was kept for sea turtles and Right whales in the dredging area and dump site.

## RESULTS

There were no incidents or sightings involving endangered species during the dredging project.

## SUMMARY

On 21 March 2008, the hopper dredge *McFarland* began dredging in Morehead City, NC and continued until 04 April 2008. Dredging was conducted on the *McFarland* for approximately 15 days with a total of 73 loads. There were zero endangered species incidents or sightings found during this project.

All pertinent information was recorded and copies were made for the USACE.

If there are any questions regarding this report please feel free to contact us at the number below.

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